

Standing on Ford Island... 60 years later

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Clarence Lane stood on exactly the same spot where he had been standing 60 years ago – the morning he watched Japanese Zeroes fly across the harbor toward him and his two friends.

Strafing fire from the oncoming red rising sun-marked planes hit the ground where the Sailors stood – and killed one of Lane’s buddies. He and his other friend were injured from the strafing attack, but according to Lane, “we ran like hell for the cover of the hangar.”

Lane sustained some injuries, including lacerations on his leg, but said that he just kept on going.

“We didn’t pay much attention,” recalled the 78-year-old Pearl Harbor survivor. “We had too much to do. You didn’t stop for things like that.”

On the Saturday night before the attack, he and his friends enjoyed “liberty” in Honolulu and had just returned to Ford Island. As they stood on the southwest corner of the sea-plane ramp in front of the hangar where they were assigned, glass started falling at their feet like rain.

According to Lane, this was when his friend was killed. “I looked up and saw that the lights on the building were being shot out by the Japanese,” he said., remembering that when he looked back, his friend had been killed on the spot and then suddenly things quickly became worse as the invading Japanese bombed the hangars and the Navy planes.

“There was so much going on that I don’t know what my emotions were, but I was scared,” he reflected. “We knew that it was for real – it was no drill.”

He almost broke down as he remembered the details of the

attack.

“There were many Sailors in the water and many who were brought ashore...they were seriously injured and a lot of them were covered with oil and badly burned,” he related. “It was just horrible.”

Even though six decades have passed, the memories of that long ago Sunday morning, Dec. 7, 1941, still bring tears to Lane’s eyes. He has never forgotten the emotion and the fear that he felt on that day and when he recently returned to Ford Island, his first visit since he was assigned there during the attack on Pearl Harbor, he relived that “day of infamy.”

Tall and slender of stature with thinning gray hair and blue eyes, Lane now bears little resemblance to the young 16-year-old Sailor who joined the Navy for adventure – to travel far away from his small hometown in Kansas. It was at the urging of his mother, who felt that serving in the Navy would be the best thing for her son, that Lane enlisted. “The high point of my Navy service was when I joined the Navy on my 16th birthday,” he explained. “I joined the Navy to see the world.”

On Oct. 1, 1941, just two short months before the attack on the Navy’s Pacific Fleet, Lane arrived for duty at Pearl Harbor. A seaman assigned to Patrol Squadron Twenty-One (VP-21), the young Sailor helped to load and retrieve the planes.

“We would wade out into the cold water early in the morning and wait for the seaplanes to come near,” he said. “We would then bring down the landing gear and attach a line from a tractor on the shore, which would pull the planes up to dry land.

“This was very junior Sailor work and very unpleasant, but

someone had to do it,” he continued.

It was after the horrific events of the Pearl Harbor attack that he went to his last duty station in Hawaii, an assignment located on the Waianae coast of Oahu, where he helped to set up the first radio-controlled target aircraft drone.

But duty in Hawaii did allow some time for leisure – and he recounted his favorite pastimes as spear fishing, swimming and enjoying luaus. Joking about escapades which he referred to as “midnight acquisitions”, the Pearl Harbor survivor described treks to a nearby Army encampment where they would cut a hole in the back of an Army tent, help themselves to a case of beer and take it back to their Navy site and party.

Since VP-21 lost its planes during the Pearl Harbor attack, Lane went back to San Diego and was later assigned to Midway.

During his Navy tenure, he volunteered for duty on the carrier USS Nassau from Bremerton, Wash. According to Lane, the USS Nassau was a new ship, the only action fighting aircraft carrier in the South Pacific. And he soon found himself aboard the carrier on its shakedown cruise – as it headed back to a place he had tried to forget, Pearl Harbor, and then to Guadalcanal.

Lane spent six years in the Navy and returned home to Kansas to help his mother after his honorable discharge on Dec. 13, 1946. He later went to work for Pan American World Airways, retiring in 1985.

The World War II veteran has visited the islands since the war, but this time it was an especially meaningful trip – a chance to share the island and his former duty station with



JPCS (SW) Phil Eggman photo

Clarence Lane, a Pearl Harbor survivor who was assigned to Patrol Squadron Twenty-One (VP21) at Ford Island during the Dec. 7, 1941 attack, visits the USS Utah Memorial during a recent visit to Hawaii.

his wife, Nobuko, and daughter Tami. “I wanted to show my wife and daughter the island. I wanted the opportunity to see Ford Island again – I really wanted to do that,” the golden ager explained.

The family spent a few short days in the islands – on a whirlwind tour that took them to such local landmarks as Pearl Harbor, the Arizona Memorial and the USS Utah Memorial. He also received a tour of Marine Corps Base Hawaii Kaneohe Bay and a tour of the USS Cheyenne before returning to his home at Merritt Island, Florida, near Kennedy Space Center.

Relating that they can easily view the space launchings from their home, Lane said, “They make a lot of noise and the windows rattle.” Lane also has two older children, three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

The Pearl Harbor survivor emphatically dismissed any concerns about traveling to Hawaii in light of recent world events. “We had built up some

frequent flier miles and thought this would be a good opportunity to use them. I wasn’t at all worried about coming,” he said.

Lane expressed his appreciation to all of those who were instrumental in making his visit to Hawaii so memorable.

“I’m so tickled and glad to be here. Everyone has been so wonderful,” he said. “I am very appreciative to everyone and all that they have done,” he continued.

A nostalgic visit though a difficult one for the former Navy Sailor, Clarence Lane relived his memories, his voice shaking with emotion. “It’s tough – really tough – a lot tougher than I thought it would be,” he admitted, tears shining in his eyes.

“Looking at the hangars [on Ford Island] was really difficult,” he explained. Probably, his words and feelings can sum up those felt by many Pearl Harbor survivors. “I thought that after all these years, it would be over,” he said quietly. “But it isn’t.”

Debate continues concerning attacking Afghanistan during Ramadan

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WASHINGTON (NNS) — A debate is ongoing about whether the United States and its coalition allies should continue the campaign against terrorism during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

U.S. and allied officials won’t officially say what they will do, figuring the enemy doesn’t need to know the campaign plan. But what is Ramadan and why would people think it’s a good idea to stop a war during it?

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. The lunar-based calendar figures the start of the month from the first sighting of the crescent moon. This year, calculations say Ramadan starts Nov. 16.

Ramadan is a month of fasting for Muslims. One of the five pillars of the faith, fasting is compulsory for every Muslim adult. The word “fasting” is a

loose English translation — the Arabic word, “sawm,” literally means “to refrain,” but in Islam means refraining from food, drinks and sexual activity from dawn to sunset. The month will end Dec. 16 with the celebration of “Eid-ul-Fitr.”

The people of the Arabian Peninsula practiced fasting during Ramadan before the Prophet Mohammed. Jewish and Christian prophets, most notably Abraham, Moses and Jesus, practiced fasting. The Koran says, “O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint.”

Muslims during Ramadan are encouraged to do good deeds, refrain from habitual and reprehensible deeds. The Koran says Allah, the Almighty, ordains special rewards for good actions and thoughts during this month.

The virtues of fasting and other recommended actions by the Prophet

Mohammed teach Muslims how to appreciate those virtues and get nearer to Allah, and put an end to vices, bad habits and character faults.

Mohammed received the Koran from Allah during Ramadan. It is called the “Night of Power (Lailat-ut Qadr)” or the “Night of Blessing (Lailat-ul Mubarak).” This was the night when the Koran was revealed to mankind. Prophet Mohammed recommended Muslims search for this night of power in the odd nights of the last 10 nights in Ramadan.

Some leaders of Muslim countries have called for a suspension of the campaign against terrorism during Ramadan. But Islamic history is rife with instances where wars and conflicts continued during Ramadan. The Prophet Mohammed himself participated in some of the campaigns.

The most famous instance was the Battle of Badr which took place on the

16th day of Ramadan. The Prophet and 313 of his companions set out to intercept a caravan from Mecca.

They were met by a well-equipped army of the nobility of Qurayish. The Qurayish ruled Mecca and Mohammed considered them idolaters. Though outnumbered, Mohammed and his followers fought to a draw.

The final campaign against the Qurayish was also during Ramadan. Mohammed led a great army from Medina to Mecca to take and purify the Ka’aba, the holy shrine built by Abraham and Ishmael.

Seeing the power of the army, the Qurayish surrendered Mecca without a fight. Following the city’s occupation, Mohammed sent detachments to outlying areas where Muslims destroyed the idols of al-Lat, Manat and Suwa.

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